

NOV 19 1998

THE BAPTIST

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
901 COMMERCE ST STE 401
NASHVILLE TN 37203-3620

SINCE 1877

ER 12, 1998

VOL. 122

No. 40

Serbian Baptist gives refugees food, hope

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—When Jasmina Tasic first asserted her Christian faith as a teenager in Serbia in the 1980s, her father burned her Bible.

His action only incited her desire to study the Word of God more, lighting a fire within her that has blazed stronger than the bombs around her homeland.

In the midst of ethnic and religious strife in the Yugoslav federation, thousands of refugees from Bosnia, Croatia, and surrounding areas now look to the ministry she co-directs for food, shelter, and hope.

In Belgrade, Serbia — where evangelical Christians number but 2,000 among the city's 2 million people — Bread of Life ministries has functioned as a network among evangelical churches since 1992 to serve refugees of all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

In the process, Bread of Life calls Christians within her war-torn society to find their identity in Christ, Tasic said during an October visit to the United States.

Violence and intolerance has disoriented and disconnected her culture, she said, but God was nevertheless at work. "War helped shape our Christian identity. We were forced to grow up in faith in order to survive."

In recent weeks, her country has faced possible NATO air strikes in response to the Serbian repression of ethnic Albanian dissidents in Kosovo.

Bread of Life plans to send physical aid to the helpless in Kosovo, ironic as it may seem to Serbian nationals who seek to repress that area. Compassion, Tasic said, transcends politics in the Christian community.

"I thank God that I found Jesus in the early stages of my life, so that I would learn to deal with conflict," Tasic reflected.

As a child, she visited a Baptist neighbor every afternoon who would tell her Bible stories.

She never missed a day, and those stories taught her about the love and identity of Christ Jesus. At age 19, she asked her neighbor to take her to his church, First Baptist of Belgrade.

"My parents were shocked," Tasic said. "They couldn't understand why I would want to go to church, read the Bible and pray. ... but this is actually a usual kind of reaction to the Christian way of life in my country. ... There is a very open hatred and hostility toward the Creator, even to the point of fear." One afternoon, Tasic found her spiritual literature heaped in a burning pile lit by her father — but she always kept a spare Bible hidden and handy.

Tasic maintains regular contact with her own family, despite their differing religious practices. While her brother accepted Christ three years after she did, both parents still do not understand their children's religious decisions.

Bread of Life has distributed more than 7 million pounds of supplies to the needy in Serbia, Bosnia, and now Kosovo.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) International Mission Board has maintained



FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY — Bill Cashion (left), International Mission Board consultant for human needs, discusses world hunger strategy with Jasmina Tasic, co-director of the Bread of Life ministry in Belgrade, Serbia. The two were part of a Southern Baptist World Hunger Consultation Oct. 9-11 at Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

a presence in the region throughout the entire Balkan War, having sent more than \$2 million to local ministries there since 1992 from the SBC's World Hunger Fund.

While hundreds of other humanitarian workers left Kosovo recently in anticipation of bombing raids, an estimated 50,000 Albanian Kosovars are without shelter, while makeshift plastic sheeting protects another estimated 50,000-100,000 from the coming winter.

Bread of Life plans to bring supplies across the Serbian border to these people.

At an SBC World Hunger Consultation at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center in October, Tasic thanked Southern Baptists for their support.

She intended her visit to be a voice for Christians from Serbia, and to seek encouragement and vision for the ministry's future. She hopes the "prayer protection" of Christians who support the ministry will launch Bread of Life to new levels of refugee aid and job training. "What we are doing with Bread of Life," Tasic said, "may be our last chance for the salvation of many people."

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Food going to Honduras

Preaching in Miss.

MBC wrap-up

Letters to the editor

Missions bulletin hits 500,000

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — A new publication designed to tell Southern Baptists how God is at work around the world jumped to 500,000 copies in its first two months on the market.

The International Mission Board's (IMB) new "mobilization files" are a bulletin insert-sized news sheet loaded with concise reports from the cutting edge of world missions. The files are delivered free of charge to congregations each month.

A sample of the first issue was sent to pastors along with the September issue of the IMB's monthly magazine, "The Commission." The pastors were told the files were available free of charge in whatever quantities a church could distribute.

To order the mobilization files, contact the International Mission Board at customer.service@imb.org or call toll-free 1-800-866-3621. The IMB's Internet site is <http://www.imb.org>.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention meeting at First Church, Jackson, approves a motion to amend the budget, giving \$200,000 to Baptist-affiliated Clarke College in Newton. The motion, which passes 871-413, is presented at the request of Mississippi College trustees who are managing Clarke.

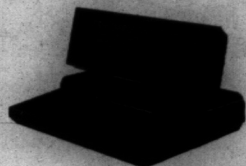
20 years ago

Morgantown Church, Natchez, dedicates its new 650-seat sanctuary, office complex, and organ in a four-day celebration called, "A Time of Dedication." The organ dedication features Paul Anderson, professor of music at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Talmage Smith is pastor.

30 years ago

Maxie King of Canton accepts the position of education secretary and music director at Southside Church, Meridian. King is a graduate of the Woman's Missionary Union Training School and the School of Music at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. A. Estes Mason is pastor.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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VOLUME 122 NUMBER 39
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date.

The only poll that counts

Polls, polls, polls. It seems everybody with an issue is taking a poll these days. Overnight polls. Exit polls. Political polls. Consumer polls. Name an issue — any issue — and some group has likely commissioned a poll with the expectation that their position will be validated by the results.

Does a pollster ever call to ask your opinion? The Perkins household has been poll-free for about two years, since that nice woman on the telephone wanted to know about our lawn care (we don't care) and how we wash our clothes (in massive quantities).

That's too bad, because (1) we're the quintessential average American family — with the possible exception of food consumption — and (2) we'll talk to just about anyone on the phone.

At any rate, it appears Americans are growing weary of constant polling. One doesn't have to be called repeatedly to tire of the unrelenting barrage of poll results that passes for reportage in downsized, bottom-line network news departments.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that refusal rates for many polls now top 40%. That certainly appears to indicate Americans are jaded about polls.

The Journal article also reported that an outfit named McLaughlin and Associates conducted a poll on polls (I'm not kidding), and found 60% of respondents think there are too many polls.

With all due respect for the honest, professional pollsters who really do a good job in a most scientific manner, if we want to know how people really feel we should be tracking their conduct in life and not their words on a telephone. That's the only poll that counts.

That point has been driven home in a most forceful way during the past year by the people of America, and they did it on an issue of monumental importance to the future of this country.

While the polls commissioned by Planned Parenthood and other pro-abortion groups consistently conclude the vast majority of Americans favor legalized abortion of any type for any reason at any point during pregnancy, the people of America have voted otherwise with their time, talent, and treasure.

Carlisle, Iowa, is the home of Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey, the parents of the only living septuplets in medical history. You will recall the McCaugheys were strongly advised to eliminate some of the seven fetuses (that's "babies" to you and me) so the others would have better chances to be born healthy.

Of course, the devoutly-Christian McCaugheys refused, placing the babies' futures in the hands of God. They knew they didn't have the resources to provide for seven infants and a toddler, but they trusted that God would provide as long as they were in his will.

That's when the people of America mobilized. They devoted thousands and thousands of hours to the care of these infants in the first year of their lives, working around the clock to make sure all the family's needs were met.

The governor of Iowa asked a wealthy contractor friend about a larger home for the McCaugheys. The contractor agreed to build it at no cost to the family.

A new van was donated. Diapers and baby food and formula poured in from around the country. Four colleges offered full scholarships to the McCaughey children.



Kenny McCaughey (right), signs his new book, "Seven from Heaven," for Betty Phelps (left), preschool Sunday School teacher at First Church, Jackson. McCaughey was a special guest for the church's Oct. 25 homecoming celebration. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

While all such stories don't have equally happy endings, there's no disputing that virtually all the McCaughey family needs have been met.

Their story does bring us to some obvious questions: If fetuses (babies) are so expendable in modern America — as the polls would have us believe — why did the country fall in love with the McCaugheys?

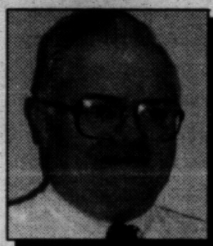
If babies are so inconvenient, why did all those people take unpaid leaves of absence from their jobs to care for the septuplets at around the clock?

If babies are so unimportant, why do complete strangers begin to cry when they meet the McCaugheys?

One of the salient answers is that God in his wisdom chose to once again express through the McCaugheys, to all who are willing to listen, the importance he places on every individual life he creates.

Maybe — just maybe — he sent a little message about relying on polls, too.

GUEST OPINION:



Rules for a successful marriage

By Don Hicks, consultant, MBCB
Discipleship / Family Ministry Dept.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).

These words from the Old Testament book of Ruth are often used in weddings. Of course, we should remember in its original context this beautiful love promise was made by a widowed daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law.

The words represent a family love that endures through adversity and trial. It is truly "family" in the strictest sense of the word since the relationship began when one man, Naomi's son Mahlon, married Ruth.

The passage, though not originally dealing with weddings and marriage, is very appropriate in Christian weddings.

This is true because its challenge is consistent with what Christ says is God's original plan from the beginning of the creation.

Here are Christ's words: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a

man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:6-9 KJV).

It is my opinion that if we are to take these teachings of Jesus seriously in our own lives and marriages we must make a commitment to live daily in ways that strengthen our marriages.

Marriages are successful one day at a time in real life. Success is achieved in giving attention daily to the seemingly little things.

I want to suggest some rules for a successful marriage, which I believe are practical in today's America.

It is my observation that marriages which typically follow most of these rules are last-

ing and fulfilling. Those marriages where I have seen several of these rules violated as an ongoing way of life usually fail.

1. Eat most of your meals each day with your family.
2. Go to bed at the same time as your spouse and get up together every morning that it is possible.
3. Find ways often to show your love tangibly through small gifts and acts of kindness.
4. Never criticize your mate in front of anyone, and always take your mate's side and support them.
5. Attend church, community events, school events, etc. together.
6. Pray together at each meal and pray for each other daily.
7. Never entertain any thought other than a lifelong

total commitment to your spouse and marriage (remember Jesus' words in Mark 10).

8. Talk freely to each other in total honesty, holding back absolutely nothing.

9. Give yourself enthusiastically and often to your spouse in marital commitment — obeying 1 Cor. 7:3-5: "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence" (1 Cor. 7:3-5 KJV).

10. Grow in your own relationship with Jesus Christ, and your ability to love as Christ loves you.

This is the concept to which Paul referred in Eph 5:25:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."

This is the real challenge, for a believer to understand how much Jesus loves him.

Try to love your spouse as much as Jesus loves you.

Hicks is a member of First Church, Clinton.

Honduras food relief picking up speed

LA CEIBA, Honduras (BP and local reports) — Even as superstorm Hurricane Mitch weakened into a tropical storm and thrashed southern Florida, Mississippi Baptists geared up to minister to hundreds of thousands of Hondurans after Mitch blew through their poor Central American country.

More than 200,000 people have been left homeless along Honduras' northern coast, said Southern Baptist missionary Ken Cummins.

The Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the Brotherhood Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) announced Nov. 4 that an urgent request for food relief had been received from the Honduras-based coordinator of a partnership involving the Mississippi Baptist Medical/Dental Fellowship.

Mississippi Brotherhood Director Paul Harrell reported

that a food collection program would be put into action around the state from Nov. 3-18.

MBCB executive director-treasurer Jim Futral joined the food relief effort, urging Mississippi Baptists in a Nov. 5 column in *The Baptist Record* to get involved in the food collection.

For more information on the food project or to make a cash donation to help purchase food for the starving Hondurans, contact either the Brotherhood Department or WMU at (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

Honduras and Nicaragua bore the brunt of the storm, one of this century's most destructive. As many as 10,000 people are feared dead from flooding and mudslides in Central America.



"The Honduras Baptist Mission and the Honduras Baptist Convention are joining to take food, clothing and medicine to La Ceiba, Trujillo, Tocoa and other areas along the northern coast," Cummins said.

Ebenezer Church in La Ceiba was sheltering some 200 people left without food or shelter by Mitch.

At International Mission Board headquarters in Richmond, Va., \$178,000 in relief aid was released for the Honduras project.

The area around the Ebenezer church was cut off when two bridges were destroyed by Mitch, Cummins said. Thousands were without communication as a result.

"Please pray for those left homeless due to Mitch," the missionary said. "Pray for relief workers from the Honduras Baptist Mission and the Honduras Baptist Convention as they join hands with other Christians to reach out in the name of Jesus."

At the Baptist World Alliance, BWAid grants of \$5,000 each have been released for relief ministry through the Baptist conventions of Honduras and Nicaragua.

Further up the coast in Belize, missionary Jim McGriff gave thanks that a major disaster had been averted in that low-lying country.

McGriff, who lives in Belmopan, said only overcast skies and moderate rain had occurred there. Belmopan became the capital of Belize

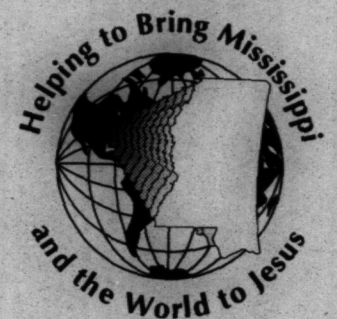
when it was moved inland after a disastrous hurricane in the '60s. "Your prayers have literally saved our lives! Two days ago Mitch [then, a category 5 hurricane] was on a due-west collision course with Belize ... which would have probably destroyed most of Belize," McGriff wrote prayer supporters. "As your prayers came before the Father's throne, the storm halted its westward movement, turned south and began to lose strength."

The McGriffs, who work with descendants of the Maya Indians in Belize, had sheltered

many people in their home. Homer and Sharon Hawthorne in Corozal took in some 60 people fleeing from the storm's path and another large number were housed at the Baptist camp near Belmopan.

Food supplies are running short in Belmopan, the McGriffs reported. The city's population was swelled by refugees from Belize City, where high winds and flooding were reported.

"Please remember our Indian people who live in inadequate housing near rivers and streams that might flood and might not have sufficient food supplies," the McGriffs requested.



THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

Resolutions comm. reports



Linda Smith (foreground), member of Calvary, Jackson, and vice-chair of the Resolutions Committee for the 1998 Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC), delivers the resolutions report Oct. 28 to messengers gathered for the convention at First Church, Jackson. Members of the Resolutions Committee are gathered behind Smith. Following the committee's recommendations, messengers approved six of seven resolutions submitted at the convention. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Miss. CP maintains lead

Mississippi Baptists gave nearly \$2.3 million through the Cooperative Program (CP) in October, according to an announcement by Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which disburses the funds.

The October total of \$2,291,221, when added to giving earlier this year, is \$22,008,914.

This 1998 total amount is \$76,763, or .35%, more than that given for the first ten months of 1997. 1998 giving is \$720,074, or 3.38%, over the pro rata budget.

The pro rata budget is figured by taking the total 1998 Cooperative Program budget of \$25,546,608, dividing by 12, and multiplying by the number of elapsed months in the year.

The Cooperative Program helps fund such programs as the upcoming Reconciliation Seminary at Providence Baptist Church, Gautier, on Nov. 23.

"It is good to see the Cooperative Program giving up among Mississippi Baptists. It is not so much an indication of the condition of the economy as it indicates the condition of the hearts of God's people. It is the lifeline of missions from the pews to the places of need," said Futral.

SBC CP posts 18% increase

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) receipts for October increased nearly 18% over the same month a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee. The October receipts, \$15,526,056, compared to October 1997's \$13,176,027, are an increase of 17.84%, or \$2,350,029.

For the monthly SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the October CP receipts were \$2,608,912 over the required monthly budget figure of \$12,917,143.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1998-99 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 12, 1998

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Miss. preachers offer first pastorate counsel

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

Final in a series

The Baptist Record asked four pastors in the state to answer questions related to resources for preaching.

Rickey Blythe has been pastor of First Church, Flora, for the past four years. He previously pastored churches in Texas and Mississippi. He is a graduate of Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

On Oct. 1, Jim Futral became the executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board after pastoring Broadmoor Church, Jackson, for 12 years. He is a graduate of Blue Mountain College, attended Southwestern Seminary, and graduated from New Orleans Seminary with the Master of Divinity and with the Doctor of Ministry degrees.

Chuck Pourciau came to First Church, Louisville, in June of 1991. A native of Louisiana, he is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton and has the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from New Orleans Seminary.

Dean Register is the pastor of Temple Church in Hattiesburg and is the current president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. A native of Georgia, Register is a graduate of Valdosta State College and New Orleans Seminary with both the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Theology degrees.

magic of that moment cannot be duplicated. While congregations may have lost the power and dynamic of that experience, so have some of us as preachers and it is a tragic loss.

POURCIAU: If I were starting over today, knowing what I now know, I would be more jealous of my study time. If we allow them to, intrusions will decimate study time.

REGISTER: I would dare to trust God in a bigger way. I would be more eager to step out of the boat and attempt the impossible for him. I would also enjoy being myself. Early in my ministry I tried to be Billy Graham. Soon I realized that God made only one Billy Graham and, thankfully, God made only one Dean Register.

BR: In the process of preparing to preach in a first pastorate, what is the single most important aspect and why?

FUTRAL: My advice to a young preacher going to his first pastorate would be, "love the folks." Love them outside the church, love them in the church, love them when you are preaching, love them when you are visiting them — love the folks! Ten years after you are gone, it is doubtful anybody who heard you preach will be able to tell you one thing you said, but they will never forget the caring touch you brought upon their lives. Does that mean preaching is unimportant? Not at all. It means that the foundation for all that you communicate to the congregation will be received or rejected because they sense the man of God who has come among them not only has a message but genuinely cares for them.

POURCIAU: The single most important aspect of preparation to preach is the preparation of the preacher. It will not matter how "brilliant" the content of the sermon is if the Holy Spirit is not active in the preaching event. That only happens when the preacher is Spirit-filled.

REGISTER: I would tell a young preacher that his primary calling is to exalt Jesus Christ. I would challenge him to immerse his preaching in the atoning work of Christ. He may be blessed with a heavenly voice, a brilliant mind, and a winning personality, but if he fails to proclaim the riches of God's grace then he has neglected his responsibility as a herald.

BLYTHE: I would say his spiritual preparation. For six years I worked on an assembly line in a furniture factory. Every day when I reported to work I knew I had to help produce furniture. It soon became very mechanical and boring. When the preacher neglects his devotional life it will not be long until sermon preparation becomes a drudgery and not a delight. You will begin to feel like a sermon factory spinning out three, sometimes more, sermons every week. Spend time alone with God and you will experience a power when you preach that cannot be produced by natural man. The holiness of a church will never rise above the holiness of its pastor. When you take to the pulpit do not be just studied up, be confessed up and prayed up.

BR: Resources are essential if a pastor is going to remain fresh and prepare three messages a week. What are the top three resources you have found in helping you prepare to preach week after week?

POURCIAU: There are certain publications which summarize what's hot in Christian

and secular periodicals. Current Thoughts and Trends is one example.

The advent of the internet has greatly broadened the preaching resources available to the busy preacher. These include fine web sites that are dedicated to helping with sermon preparation, along with secular news sites and information web sites that help us keep our fingers on the pulse of society.

Finally, I would add, ears! If we will just listen to what is going on around us, the Holy Spirit will provide us with a wealth of material and direction.

REGISTER: First, I have to saturate my heart and mind with God's truth in order to maintain a biblical world view. Consequently, it is essential for me to stay in the Word and to read it from several translations each day.

Second, contemporary Christian music nourishes my soul. It helps me stay in a mood of worship from Sunday to Sunday.

Third, evangelical commentaries such as The Word Commentary, The New International Commentary, and The New American Commentary series are all valuable in their own way.

BLYTHE: First I would recommend a good study Bible. There are several available, but for 18 years I have used the Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible. Then, commentaries are essential as you build up your library. A couple I would recommend include The New American Commentary and The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Last of all the internet has proven to be a new and invaluable resource. Let me suggest three sites: www.bible.org. This is a ministry of Dallas Theological Seminary. Another is www.hitbox.com. If you go into this site, go to the religion section.

The third site is one you must pay for: www.sermonsearch.com. If you enjoy reading sermons you will like this site.

FUTRAL: A library. In the early days of my ministry, a church set up in its budget as part of my compensation a library account. As best I remember it was \$25 a month for me to purchase books. I bought tools that enabled me to study effectively, quality commentaries covering the entire Bible. Within a few short years I had a room full of effective tools that have served me well for decades.

The second resource I have found helpful is meditation. Meditation on the Word of God is the time allowed for ideas to grow, for truths to be formulated, for concepts to come to life. The unfolding and growth of truth in our lives does not take place quickly. If sermon preparation is "grab a thought," try and digest it, expand on it, and become excited about it on Saturday afternoon, more than likely the only thing happening is that your blood pressure will rise.

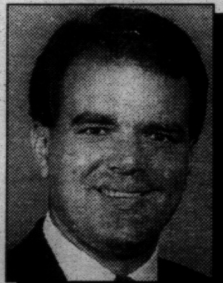
A third resource that I have found most helpful is a planned approach to preaching. Though it was not a hard and fast rule with me, I generally stayed in preparation three to six months into the future. The God who can help you get ready to preach three or four days before Sunday is also able to see three or four months down the road. If you can get in touch with him and stay sensitive to his leading, you can get a word that begins to bless you and grow and become a blessing when you proclaim it.



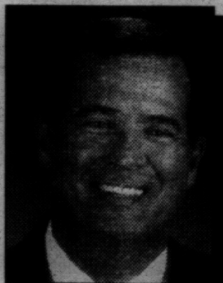
Blythe



Futral



Pourciau



Register

Pastors' wives learn health, nutrition tips



The husband-wife team of Melinda (above) and Tommy Yessick, consultants for LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, were the featured speakers for the Annual Conference of Mississippi Baptist Ministers' Wives Oct. 26 at First Church, Jackson. In her presentation on nutrition, First Place weight control program leader Melinda Yessick displays a test tube filled with sugar — the amount of sweetener contained in an average soft drink. Tommy Messick, a wellness and Leader Care consultant, makes a point in his presentation about diet and health. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



Lay missions speakers urge involvement

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

Around 420 people attending the 1998 Lay Missions banquet at First Church, Jackson, on Oct. 26 prior to the Mississippi Baptist Convention heard testimony from a professional baseball player; saw awards given to volunteers in missions; heard reports of our partnership mission projects; and received a challenge from the president of the Ukraine Baptist Union.

"I don't believe I was put here just to play baseball," said Jeff Brantley, a member of First United Methodist Church in Clinton and a pitcher with the St. Louis Cardinals.

"Baseball is just my job. It is a fun job and I enjoy doing it, but first and foremost, I try to live my life for Jesus Christ," he said.

"This thing I know, ... Jeff Brantley is not just about baseball. Jeff Brantley is about spreading the word of Jesus Christ."

Kay Cassibry, executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), presented the 1998 Volunteer in Missions award to Donna Swarts.

Swarts is a member of Corinth Church in Simpson Association. She has been involved in WMU and Brotherhood disaster relief efforts since the Albany, Georgia flood of 1993.

In May of this year, the national WMU office sent Swarts to North Dakota to coordinate child care for flood victims. Cassibry pointed out that Swarts would be leaving for

Texas the day after the banquet to once again coordinate child care for flood victims.

Jim Didlake, Mississippi Brotherhood consultant, presented the other 1998 Volunteer in Mission Award to Terry Cross of State Boulevard Church, Meridian. Cross was not present to receive the reward, due to the fact that he was in Wyoming helping build a church.

Didlake said Cross has been involved as a mission volunteer since the 1960s. Recently he has been active in World Changers, another Brotherhood construction ministry for young people.

Bill Hardy, head of the MBCB Partnership Mission office for the past six years, presented a report of mission partnerships with Honduras, Colorado, and Venezuela. Hardy, who will retire this December, said since 1981 Mississippi Baptists have participate in 11 mission partnerships, seven international, and four states.

Hardy also introduced new partnerships with the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware and the Ukrainian Baptist Union.

Charles Barnes, executive director of the Maryland/Delaware convention, said that while theirs is a strong convention, they have many needs. He pointed out that there were 8.5 million people within 45

miles of the convention headquarters.

"We have had partnerships with other groups where we were giving. Now we are entering into a partnership where we receive," said the Mississippi native.

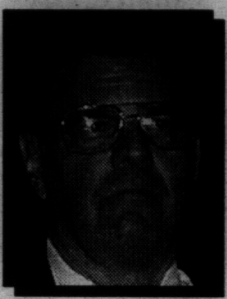
The keynote address was delivered by Gregory Komendant, president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union. Speaking through a translator, Komendant urged Mississippi Baptists to hear the call of Christ to follow and go.

"We have open doors," Komendant said, referring to the opportunities that are present now since the collapse of communism.

"However, we realize that within these open doors we are so weak and so small. That is why we are so glad to have you, our brothers, ... because the door is open, but who will come? Who will be first, Mormons or Baptists? The Jehovah Witnesses or evangelical churches?"

"Never have we had such opportunity as today, and we do not know for how long God will give us. Our call to missions is to follow Jesus, and he knows where we need to go."

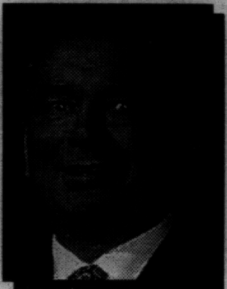
For more information, contact the Partnership Missions office, the Brotherhood Department, or Miss. WMU at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



Barnes



Brantley

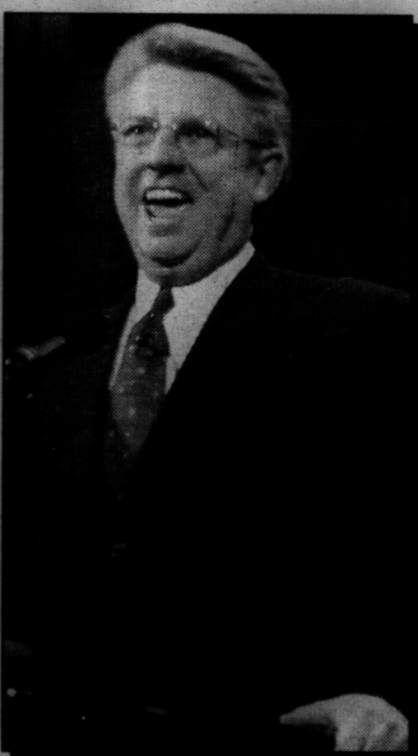
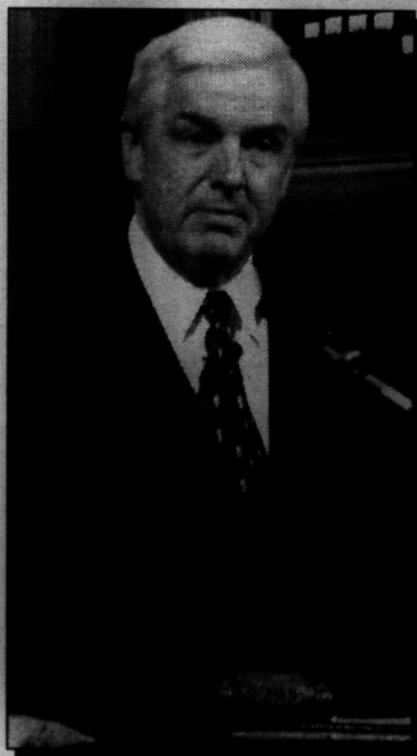


Komendant



TOP VOLUNTEER — Kay Cassibry, executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, presents the 1998 Volunteer in Missions award to Donna Swarts, a member of Corinth Church in Simpson Association. (Photo by Carl M. White)

'98 MBC highlights include preaching, special music



Highlights from the 1998 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Oct. 27-28 at First Church, Jackson, included:

♦ an opening session message from Jack Graham (second left photo, above), senior pastor at Prestonwood Church in Dallas, noted speaker, and author of a number of publications.

♦ a closing session message from David Jeremiah (left photo, above), pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, Calif., since 1981, and founder of Turning Point radio ministry based in San Diego.

♦ performances by the Worship Team (above far right photo) of Temple Church, Hattiesburg, and the full Celebration Choir (right photo) of Temple Church — just prior to the MBC President's Address by Dean Register, Temple Church pastor and second-term convention president. (Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.)

National roundup: states hold conventions

KANSAS-NEBRASKA

Kansas-Nebraska Southern Baptists were challenged to "sow down" the two states with the gospel during the 53rd annual meeting of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists Oct. 19-20 at First Southern Baptist Church, Garden City, Kan.

A total of 231 people registered as messengers along with 44 visitors.

Messengers approved the 1999 KNCSB budget of \$4,395,480, a 4.8% increase over 1998. Cooperative Program receipts from Kansas-Nebraska Southern Baptist churches are expected to total \$2,415,000.

Giving to the national Cooperative Program was increased by .25 to 31.25%.

Don Lacy, pastor of Calvary Church in Valley Center, Kan., was re-elected president; Bryan Jones, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Junction City, Kan., recording secretary; assistant recording secretary, Mari Jaquith, a land developer who is a member of Seaman Church, Topeka, Kan.; and historian, Tony Mattia, pastor of Trinity Church, Wamego, Kan.

NEVADA

The Nevada Baptist Convention held its 20th annual meeting Oct. 20-21 at Redrock Church in Las Vegas — the same church where the

constituting sessions were held in 1978.

A total of 131 messengers attended the anniversary meeting.

A 1998 budget of \$2,255,828 was approved, up from the current year's budget of nearly \$2.2 million. In Cooperative Program giving, \$870,000 is anticipated from the state's 213 churches and missions encompassing approximately 32,000 members.

Of the CP budget, 27% will be forwarded to Southern Baptist Convention causes, a percent-of-budget increase of

of First Church, Minden; and second vice president, Eddie Hancock, pastor of Grass Valley Church, Winnemucca.

NEW MEXICO

Each of the four sessions of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico's (BCNM) Oct. 27-28 annual meeting at Glorieta Conference Center highlighted a different aspect of the harvest in preparation for entering the final year before AD 2000.

The convention's 86th annual meeting drew 284 messengers. Messengers also approved a

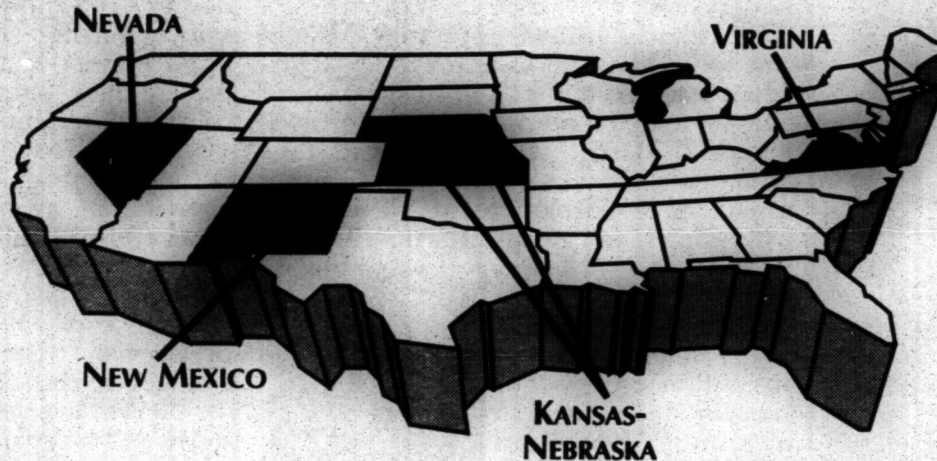
All of the new officers of the convention were elected by acclamation: Joseph Bunce, pastor of First Church, Bloomfield, president; Clark Henderson, music and senior minister at Sandia Church, Albuquerque, first vice president; Boyd Morerod, pastor, First Church, Los Chavez, second vice president.

VIRGINIA (SBCV)

Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) held their second annual meeting as a state convention Oct. 27. Messenger registration totaled 587.

The adopted 1999 budget of \$3,300,000 is twice the 1998 budget of \$1,660,000. Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international ministries will receive 50% of undesignated receipts, with no preferred or exception items, in accordance with SBCV policy.

Kelly J. Burris, senior pastor of Kempsville Church, Virginia Beach, who had been serving as first vice president, was elected president. First vice president is John Marks, pastor of Kingsland Church, Richmond. Rodney D. Houston, pastor of Chatmoss Church, Martinsville, was elected second vice president. David S. Eppling, pastor of East End Church, Roanoke, was re-elected convention secretary.

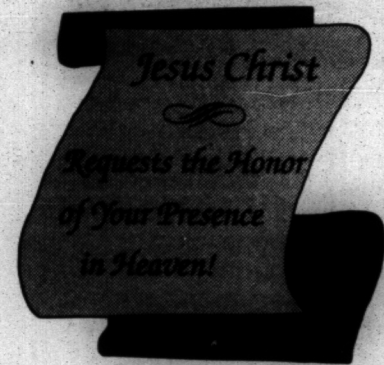


Source: Baptist Press

.25% from the previous year — an increase adopted by the convention the past several years.

New officers were elected by acclamation: president, Russ Daines, pastor of El Baptist Church, Las Vegas; first vice president, Rene Houle, pastor

record budget for their state convention, as well as budgets for three of its entities. The BCNM 1999 budget will require \$3,093,199 in Cooperative Program receipts from the churches, an increase of 2.5% over the 1998 budget amount.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

In my first few weeks on this job, I have been in churches, on campuses, and in meetings in every area of our state. I have been on both ends and in the middle, on both sides, and at the Baptist Building. It is the way I want it to be.

On a couple of occasions as I have traveled across the Delta, I passed by acres and acres of white, fluffy fields ready to be harvested.

Seed was planted, the plants grew, their crop was ready, and the harvesting conditions were excellent. It has to be a good feeling for farmers to see rows of compressed stacks of cotton on the edges of the fields.

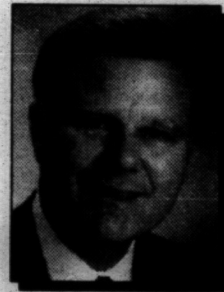
Our Lord Jesus understood the joy of that experience, and he translated the harvest time into a spiritual event.

In John 4:35, Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest." He wanted his disciples to see the glorious opportunity that was all around them.

While many of us are not dependent on farming for our livelihood, very few of us cannot relate to the sights and the needs at harvest time. There are some great spiritual truths that you and I cannot miss:

◆ **The goal is the harvest.** I have watched in the Spring as the ground is made ready and the planting begun. It is important work, and it is vital work. Just as in our churches, all that takes place in preparation is important activity.

If the seed is never placed in the ground at the proper time and in the proper way, it is for sure there will never be a harvest.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Everything — from the way we welcome those who visit our churches to the manner in which we present the Word of God clearly, truthfully, and lovingly — begins to make a difference. However, getting the seed in the ground is not the goal of the farmer. The harvest is always in sight.

◆ **One person alone is not responsible for all of the harvest.** I remember as a youngster in the days before machines picked the cotton, huge numbers of people would labor in intensive effort.

Folks took a row a time and plant by plant, boll by boll, the harvest was gathered. Even now, one person and one machine may not be enough to harvest the field, and certainly the entirety of the harvest cannot be brought in by one person.

That is precisely why the Lord has chosen you and me. That is why your Sunday School class is so important, why your church is so important, not only to the Lord but to those in the mission field at the doorstep of your congregation.

I was asked by someone recently if I knew where Sparta, Miss. was located. I told them I did and they thought I was kidding — but I really do.

self has servants there and harvesters doing his work.

Many Baptists across our state may never have the opportunity to visit Sparta, but the people in that community deserve (and have) a witness of Jesus' saving power.

One person cannot fulfill all the needs of the harvest, but we are not alone. You, me, and the folks in Sparta, and from Corinth to the Coast, from the Memphis line to Moss Point, and all between — the laborers — have been put there by the Lord.

◆ **The time is now.** Talk to any farmer and you will quickly find out there is a window of opportunity for a crop to be harvested.

Neglect getting the cotton in, or allow the winter rains to set in, or get preoccupied with other things, or rationalize that you can wait until the warmth of next Spring to gather the crop, and you will find it cannot be done that way.

If you ignore the opportune time, you will produce self-inflicted crop failure.

May God instill within every one of our hearts an urgency that pushes us out of our complacency and pulls us into the fields — for they are white unto harvest.

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

November 12, 1998

HouseTops is a **Baptist Record** supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's **Office of Communication**.

Youth Evangelism
Conference

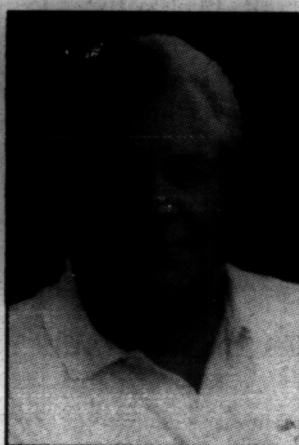


MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE
CLINTON

DECEMBER 28-29, 1998



Concert **avalon**



Speaker
Ken Smith

Worship
Music
**Mike
Harland**



Drama
Grant & Jennifer Medford

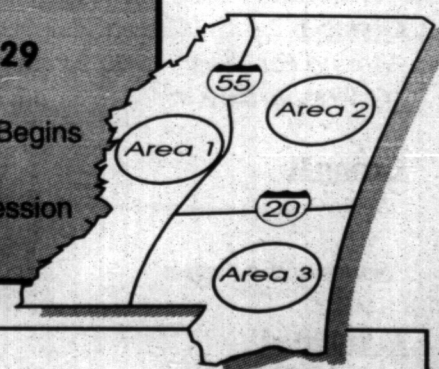
Schedule

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28

12:00 Registration Begins
2:00 Afternoon Session
4:00 Dismiss for Dinner
7:45 CONCERT - *avalon*
9:00 Dismiss

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29

7:15 Breakfast
8:45 Conference Begins
11:00 Lunch Break
1:00 Afternoon Session
3:00 Closing



REGISTRATION FORM

Church _____ Youth Minister _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Association _____ Area of State _____

(see map above)

Lodging During Conference _____

Number Attending _____ x \$5 = \$ _____ (amount enclosed)

Make checks payable to: **Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Evangelism Department**
PO Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205

Jackson motels: (State that you are with the Youth Evangelism Conference, Mississippi Baptist Convention when making reservations)

**Best Western, Metro
Comfort Inn, SW
Comfort Inn, Clinton
Days Inn, Clinton
Fairfield Inn, North
Hampton Inn, Clinton**

**Holiday Inn, Clinton
Holiday Inn, SW
La Quinta Inn
Motel 6, North
Ramada Inn, SW
Travelers Inn, North**

1999 Young Ringers Festival

Saturday, March 27
Oak Forest Baptist Church,
Jackson



Clinician
DUANE PLASH
Minister of Music
Cottage Hills Baptist Church, Mobile

Sponsored by the Church Music Department
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Jerry Talley, Handbell Contract Consultant
L. Graham Smith, Director, Church Music Department

1. This festival is designed for children/youth or mixed choirs of children and youth. The music selected for this festival will be beginning, easy, and medium difficulty. It will be limited to two to three octave handbells and/or chimes.
2. To register, complete the registration form and return with appropriate fees to the Church Music Department by Friday, March 19. The fee is \$15 per choir.
3. Set-up and registration is from 9 - 9:30 a.m. The festival will conclude by 2:30 p.m. Mass ringing begins at 9:30 a.m. Lunch is on your own; fast foods and restaurants are near.
4. There is no adjudication, but choirs that would like the experience of ringing for others will be allowed **two-and-one-half minutes** to ring a selection of their choice. This selection should not be one of the mass ringing numbers. Each of these choirs will ring from its mass ringing position.
5. Choirs should be familiar with the required selections but do not need to be performance ready. Two octave choirs are encouraged to participate in as many of the required selections as possible. Some selections require additional bells but should not keep you from participating.
6. The selections may be ordered from the Baptist Book Store in Jackson or your supplier. They are listed below.

Group I

"Bound For Glory"	arr. Waldrop	Alfred #17551	2-3 octave
"O Worship the King"	arr. Page	Alfred #17555	2-3 octave

Group II

"Rondo"	Tucker	Concordia Pub.	2-3 octave
		#97-6706	
"Songs of the Angels"	arr. Page	Choristers Guild	2-3 octave
		#CGB176	

Combined

"Jacob's Ladder"	arr. McChesney	Alfred #17534	2-3 octave
"Ring Around A Rainbow"	Kinyon	Alfred #17549	2-3 octave

The 1999 festivals will use a format which, we pray, will give more choirs the opportunity to participate in the festivals. **Group I** selections are for beginning and inexperienced choirs and are of an easy to easy-medium difficulty. **Group II** selections are for the experienced and advanced choirs and are of an easy-medium to medium difficult level. The **combination** selections are of a medium level of difficulty.

The director will choose the group in which their choir will participate and purchase music from Group I or II accordingly. All choirs will purchase the combination numbers.

THE SUIT PROJECT

What is it?

For over 34 years Baptists in Mississippi have enjoyed sending new suits to the pastors in new work areas. This is our way of letting the pastors in these areas of Southern Baptist life know that we care about and support them in their work

What you can do:

Men's ministries groups, individuals, churches, etc., can send their gifts payable to:

**Mississippi Baptist
Convention Board
Attention:
Brotherhood Department
P.O. Box 530
Jackson, MS
39205-0530**

Designate on your check: Suit Project

Sponsored by the Brotherhood Department
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Mississippi
Baptists say
"Merry
Christmas"

to pastors in the
Colorado,
Wyoming,
Montana & Iowa
Conventions

Cost:
\$130 per suit

1999 YOUNG RINGERS STATE HANDBELL/CHIME FESTIVAL REGISTRATION FORM

OAK FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON, MARCH 27

CHURCH _____ ASSOC. _____
CHURCH ADD. _____
_____ street _____ city _____ zip _____
MINISTER OF MUSIC _____ Phone _____
CHOIR NAME _____
Director _____ Number in Group _____
Group I _____ Group II _____
Number of tables you are bringing: _____ Total feet in length: _____
Number of octaves: _____
Ringing for the Parade of Choirs: ☐ no ☐ yes (2 1/2-minute maximum)
Selection: _____
Composer: _____ Minutes: _____

This form and fees should reach the Church Music Department, PO Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530 no later than March 19, 1999. The fee is non-refundable. Please make checks payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. If you have more than one choir participating in the festival, make copies of this form and send one form per choir.

☐ Registration fee of \$15 is enclosed. (Lunch is on your own.)

For more information call 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson 968-3800

FAMILY CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

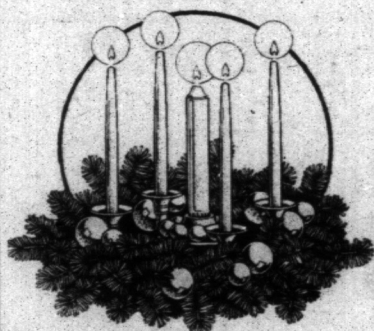
A guide for family devotions

Meaning and Purpose of Christ's Coming

The four-week period preceding Christmas is the beginning of the Christian calendar year. This period is often observed as a time of anticipation regarding Christ's coming or advent. The word "advent" means "coming" and refers to the coming of Jesus which was anticipated by the prophets. Christ has come and will come.

This is a season of anticipation and preparation. The meaning of Christmas cannot be grasped hastily. Special observance of this time can enrich the whole meaning of Christmas. The emphasis on waiting, preparation, and longing for God can counter the secular observance of Christmas that is too early, too easy, and too superficial.

In the sixth century, some Christians honored this season by setting aside a time of family worship to prepare themselves for the celebration of Christ's coming. This experience is a good way to teach children the full meaning of Christmas and to unite the family in love, warmth, gratitude, and worship.



Celebration of Christ's Coming

A wreath is often used to provide the focus for our thinking and talking about Jesus during special times of fellowship and family worship during this season. The wreath can have much symbolism:

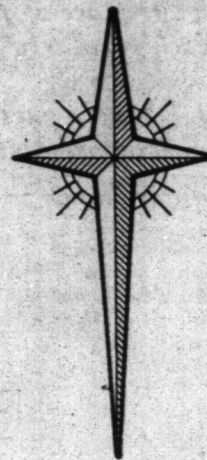
The wreath is round, with no beginning or end. This signifies the eternity of God's creation, of His love and care for man.

It is bound with evergreen foliage. The evergreen reminds us that our faith, our hope and our love are ever alive when they come from God and His Son.

The candles in the wreath represent Christ who said, "I am the light of the world." There are four candles in the wreath each representing the four Sundays prior to Christmas Day. Three are purple, the color associated with kings and royalty, and one is pink representing joy. A fifth candle, sometimes referred to as a "Christ candle," may be added at the center of the wreath and lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. This is usually a white candle, symbolizing purity.

The Christmas season is an important time in the life of the Church and the individual Christian. The Family Celebration of Christmas plan has been developed in an effort to assist families and churches in focusing on the true meaning of Christmas. We hope these will enrich your family as you seek to keep Christ at the center of the Christmas celebration.

Camera-ready copies of each week's devotional are available from the Department of Student Work at PO Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530 or call 800/748-1651 or in Jackson 968-3800.



Light

Fourth Sunday Before Christmas - November 29

Wreath. If using a wreath, light one of the purple candles. Have a family member read Isaiah 9:2.

Lead your family in a discussion of the "darkness" that people can be in; not only physical darkness, but spiritual darkness, as well. For centuries, people waited expectantly for the Messiah to come to bring them light. How blessed we are to actually know this Light personally!

Make. If you have young children, use this time to make a picture of darkness and light with construction paper or crayons. Hang the picture where you will see it this season to remind you of the Light of Christmas.

Lead. If you have older children, lead them in a discussion of how we can be a light to others and help them do it! We are usually good at sharing our material things during the Christmas season, but what people really need is the Light of Christ in their hearts.

Read. Have another family member read John 1:1-5. There are many more Scripture passages that refer to Jesus as the Light. Take time now to do a short word search with your family. Use a concordance to look up light. Have different family members read some of these passages.

During the week, think about the fact that Jesus is God's light in a darkened world. Look for ways to show His Light to others.

Sing a Christmas carol or hymn together, perhaps "Silent Night." At our house this is the favorite part of the service. Every person gets to pick a carol.

Pray, thanking God for each other, and for the joy of anticipating Christ's birth together.

GA/Acteens Campus Day - Blue Mountain College

December 5th

Cost \$7.50 per person (includes basketball game, meal, program & limited insurance)

- **Missionaries**
- **Basketball**
- **Testimonies**
- **Cheerleaders**
- **Music**

Registration Form for GA/Acteens Campus Day Blue Mountain College, December 5th

Name _____ Daytime Ph. Number _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Church Name _____ Association _____

Amount Enclosed: \$7.50 x # (of persons) _____ = \$ _____ (total)

Make checks payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Send to: WMU, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205

For more details call the WMU office at 1-800-748-1651

Pray this day for...

November 13-November 26, 1998

Prayer Ministry Office • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205-0530 • Phone 968-3800, Ext. 3904 • Mississippi PrayerLine 1-800-787-PRAY

One Way of Giving Prayer Priority

Martin Luther once described his struggle with the place of prayer in his life. "In a typical day I am charged with the pastorate of three congregations. I teach regularly at the seminary. I have students living in my home. I am writing three books. Countless people write to me. When I start each day, therefore, I make it a point to spend an hour in prayer with God. But, if I have a particularly busy day and am more rushed than usual, I make it a point to spend two hours with God before I start the day."

Keys To A Praying Church -- A booklet by CDR Publications.

For Directors of Missions Financial Planning, Camp Garaywa, sponsored by Church-Minister Relations and Annuity.

15

Baptist representative Mel Skinner is the only church planter in the Moscow area. Pray that God will raise up another church planter to minister in the city while Mel works in the outlying areas.

22

Praise the Lord for E-mail! Missionaries use electronic communications to plan strategies and share prayer requests in Muslim countries, where they mainly stay underground. There are 1.2 billion Muslims and the ratio of missionaries to Muslims is about one to a million.

Pray for the Reconciliation Seminar, Providence BC, Gautier, sponsored by Missions Extension and Associational Administration.

23

Pray for missionaries serving on the strategy team in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as they formulate a three-year strategy plan for reaching the 13 million inhabitants in their city.

Pray for the Swiss Parliament which has an 'officially accredited intercessor', Beat Christen. Recently, up to 60 people have taken part in prayer meetings in the Parliament building. Pray for the growing number of members of Parliament who are standing up for their Christian faith.

17

Terry Dorsett is church planter pastor of Washington Baptist Church, Washington, Vermont. Pray that members will have wisdom to know how to increase their Sunday School space. They need twice as much as they have.

Pray for the churches in Malaysia as there is a general lack of spiritual leadership. Sixty percent of the Baptist churches are without pastors.

25

Pray for workers who live in China year around. Pray that they will continually depend upon God's grace to rise above the inconveniences--at times extreme--related to their living conditions.

Thanksgiving Day -- Pray for Faye Basset who is church and community ministries director for the Yates Baptist Association, Durham, N. C. Pray for her and others as they get ready to start a Christian Women's Job Corps. Pray for more volunteers to help with the ministry.

19

Pray for the Chinese Christian Fellowship Revival at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Nov. 13-15. Pray for Dr. Wen, a Chinese professor at RTS, who will be preaching those services.

13

For GA/Acteens Campus Day, Blue Mountain College, sponsored by WMU. Ed Holton is a church planter apprentice in Lakeland, Fla. Pray for Great Commission Baptist Church which has just started. Pray for a sponsoring church to help the congregation.

14

Pray for the jail ministry in Manhica, Mozambique, which was started by a young Christian who was put in jail by his brothers when he refused to help them pay for the services of a witch doctor. In the 24 hours he was in jail, he won 10 inmates to the Lord.

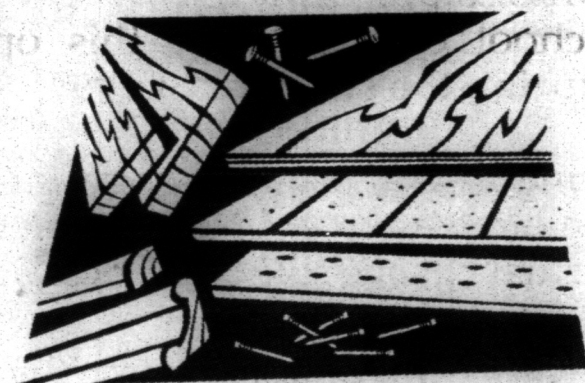
Missionaries Je Bom and Mee Park are in the first year of Cantonese language study in Hong Kong. While they are trying to concentrate on their studies, they are concerned about their daughter who is in college in the United States. Pray for this family and other missionary families who are so far away from their children.

WMU IS READY TO HIT THE ROOF!



And, the sooner we have your support, the sooner we can get down to work!

July 11-17
2 sites in Jackson



WMU is teaming up with **Habitat for Humanity** in what promises to be a challenging and rewarding missions opportunity. And we need your help.

If you have **time, skills, or resources** to share, you can help make a difference!

Here are some examples of how your gift can help:

- \$10 a floor joist
- \$20 a 50-pound box of nails
- \$25 a roof truss
- \$40 5 gallons of paint
- \$50 an interior door
- \$75 8 sheets of wallboard
- \$100 3 boxes of flooring materials
- \$250 50 bundles of roof shingles

Yes, I want to help build houses and hope for families in need of decent shelter.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Daytime phone _____

☐ I'd like to volunteer to help with a house in Jackson, Miss.
☐ Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Mail to: WMU Habitat House
Woman's Missionary Union
P O Box 830010
Birmingham, AL 35283-0010

HOUSE TOPS

SHARE 'HOLY HOWDIES'

Editor:

It is said that one experienced minister was giving counsel to a new young pastor who was nervous about attending his first Mississippi Baptist Convention.

The older minister said, "son, all you need to do is master the 'holy howdies,' and you will do fine. Here's all you need to say:"

1. "Hey, brother!"
2. "Where are you serving now, brother?"
3. "How's it goin'?"
4. "God bless you...it was good to see you."

In my thirty-two years of attending the Convention I have often heard and joked about these phrases, but I have come to see their therapeutic value as in response to these questions (especially "How's it goin'?"),

A hurting minister is able to share heartaches with a fellow brother from across the state; another may respond with testimony of victory and blessing; another may find suggestions

for implementing a program or project; and another may simply be reunited with a brother whom he hasn't seen in years!

Let us keep the "holy howdies" alive, no matter how trite the phrases, and recognize that the sharing times done in the bookstore and hallways between meetings may be as important as anything we do while at the convention.

Doug Warren
Columbus

QUESTIONS TONE

Editor:

I confess to being dubious of President Clinton's apologetic and contritional tone since admitting to the breaking of God's commandment of, "Thou shall not commit adultery."

Assuming that the President's letter of forgiveness to his home church of Immanuel in Little Rock, dealt only with his commission of adultery when he "expressed repentance for his actions, sadness for the consequences of his sin on his family, friends and church fami-

ly from Immanuel," I would like to add two more to the list.

Since the President's supporters are so quick to admonish the Christian right scripturally with, "Let him who is without sin cast the first (stone)," I would to remind the President's supporters of yet another passage of scripture, "Thou shall not kill."

President Clinton and he alone has the blood on his hands of the helpless infants murdered under the gruesome and holocaustic procedure of partial birth abortion.

Only under the administration of President Bill Clinton has the homosexual agenda been so vigorously promoted as it has. The Bible is replete with punishment for the perverted and lascivious conduct of man with man.

Furthermore, the Christian community has been falsely accused of complicity in the brutal slaying of a homosexual in Wyoming. Knowing it was a blatant lie, President Clinton said nothing.

Mike Lee
Philadelphia

PRAYER, SUPPORT NEEDED

Editor:

We praise God that Hurricane Georges did not take any lives in Mississippi! He did, however, take hundreds of people's homes and contents in

Jackson County.

Kreole Avenue Church is a small community church in Moss Point on the southeast corner of the county. Many of its families were severely affected by the storm's 8-foot surge waters and the excessive flooding of rivers. Extensive destruction was caused in areas that had never flooded before, and residents were not covered by flood insurance.

We would appreciate your prayers and support, which will be used to help our families attempt to restore, rebuild, or relocate their homes.

Kenneth Chambless, pastor
Kreole Ave. Church
Moss Point

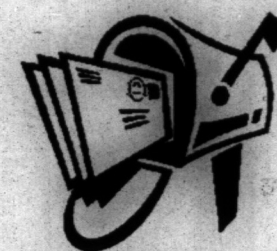
COMMENDS ALCORN

Editor:

I would like to say "thank you" to the Alcorn Association executive committee for commending Mississippi Senator Trent Lott's biblical stand on homosexuality.

As Christians we do need to lift up Sen. Lott in our prayers, as well as our other national leaders. While we are praying, let us also pray that other Baptist Associations in our state will commend the senator for his willingness to speak out for the biblical teachings on homosexuality.

J. Pete Burkes
Carthage



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Want to get a head start on your college education at special prices?

Mississippi College will give the high school class of 2000 this opportunity during the summer of 1999.

June 1 - August 4, a special program will be offered that will allow you to enroll in actual college courses for college credit.

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Students participating in this program who make a 3.0 or higher g.p.a. on six or more academic hours receive a \$1000 scholarship for their freshman year at MC.

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Mississippi College
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Mississippi College

Registering for MBC



J.M. Wood (right), minister of music at First Church, Brandon, gathers Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) messenger registration materials Oct. 27 from Bobby Butler, member of First Church, Jackson, and registration volunteer for the convention. Wood was one of 1,304 messengers who adopted a record Cooperative Program budget and approved historic constitutional changes dealing with relationships between MBC and its agencies and institutions. The convention is held annually at First Church, Jackson. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

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NAMES IN THE NEWS

Fred Tarpley, who has been a minister of the gospel for over 61 years, has now written an autobiography entitled "The Investment Of A Lifetime." Tarpley has helped organize and start 31 churches. He was the first pastor of Ridgecrest Church, Madison, (when Ridgecrest Church was located in Jackson). He also served as director of missions for Hinds/Madison (now

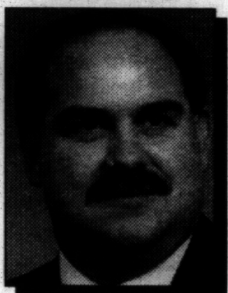
Metro) Association for 16 years. For more information about his manuscript, write him at P. O. Box 720, Madison, MS 39130-0720 or call (601) 856-6767.

James Watts and his wife Winnie will be honored with a retirement reception at Branch Church, Morton, Dec. 13, from 2-4 p.m. For more information, call (601) 732-6947.

STAFF CHANGES

Donald Pouns has accepted a call from Blood River Church, Albany, La., as pastor, effective Oct. 11. A native of McComb, Pouns received his education at Southwest Jr. College, William Carey College, and New Orleans Seminary. He previously served at Longview Church, Starkville, from 1993-1998.

Barry Ward was called by First Church, Magnolia, to serve as pastor starting in October, 1998. He resigned as pastor of Puckett Church, Puckett, on Sept. 27, where he served since July of 1991.



Ward

Pine Hill Church, Enterprise, has called **Gary D. Kelly** as pastor, effective Oct. 18. A native of Purvis, Kelly attended William Carey College. He previously served at Pine Grove Church, Heidelberg.



Kelly



Lucile Gillis, WMU director, and **Ernie Stuart**, WMU secretary/treasurer, were honored at the annual WMU Installation Banquet for their combined 110 years of service to the Woman's Missionary Union at First Church, Picayune. Pictured (from left) are Bonnie Donald, prayer chairman; Stuart; Gillis; and Bill Hardin, pastor.

Revival dates

Mt. Moriah (Lincoln): Nov. 15-18; Sunday, worship, 11 a.m., dinner in fellowship hall, and 1:30 p.m. service; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Danny Lanier, Little Rock, evangelist; Danny Moss, pastor.

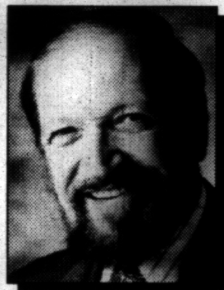
Temple, Petal: Nov. 15-18; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Dan Raley, evangelist; Tim Nelson, music.

Samford divinity school taps Miller

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) — Christian author Calvin Miller, who since 1991 has taught at Southwestern Seminary, has been named professor of preaching and pastoral ministry at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

Miller, 62, has written more than 40 books and numerous articles on religion and preaching. He was pastor of Westside Church in Omaha, Neb., 25 years before becoming professor of communication and ministry studies and writer in residence at the Southren Baptist seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He will join the faculty at Samford Jan. 1, according to officials at the university.



Miller

The Beeson Divinity School was established in 1988 by a bequest from the estate of philanthropist Ralph Waldo Beeson. Beeson, an insurance executive, left more than \$20 million in his will to begin a non-sectarian, evangelical divinity school at the Baptist university in Birmingham, Ala.

Timothy George, dean of the divinity school, said Miller "brings to Beeson proven experience as a pastor as well as unique gifts as a poet, artist, evangelist, novelist, and master communicator of God's good news."

A native of Oklahoma, Miller is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University with the master-of-divinity and doctor-of-ministry degrees from Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

HOMEcomings

Wheeler Grove, Corinth: Nov. 15; The Heismen will be singing during the entire morning worship service beginning at 10:30 a.m., and the Hoppers during the evening worship service at 7 p.m.; lunch will be provided.

Fairview, Indianola: Nov. 22; 125th homecoming; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch in Redding Hall; Stacey Blake, pastor, speaker.

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FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC/EDUCATION: First Baptist Church, Carthage. Send resumes to Mr. Louis Smith, PO Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205.

PART-TIME MUSIC/YOUTH MINISTER: Bethel Baptist Church, Hazlehurst. Send resume to C. Ashley, 4008 Ashley Rd. Hazlehurst, MS 39083. Call 601-894-2267.

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WANTED: Missionary-minded couple to serve the Lord in a home caring for

children needing a place to live. This evangelical organization has been meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children for 103 years. Compensation includes housing, food, insurance and retirement. This is not a behavior modification facility. Call Mr. Taylor at Palmer Home for Children (601) 328-5216.

FOR SALE: Last earthly home of retired Mississippi Baptist pastor (traded in for mansion in glory). 3 bedroom, 2 bath 14X80 mobile never saw smoke or alcohol, was bathed daily in prayer and Bible Study. 15 years old, in excellent condition. Exterior repainted 2 years ago, central heat and air. Must be moved from park in Clinton. A blessing at \$9995. Washer and dryer negotiable. Call John Landrum Jr. at 228-863-0211 (Gulfport).

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Christmas Bazaar will be held at Robinhood Church, Brandon, Nov. 14, beginning at 8 a.m. For more information, call (601) 825-0975.

Friendship Church, Ecu, celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sept. 27. The Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate commemorating its Sesquicentennial anniversary to John W. Stewart (left), pastor, by George Steward.



J. Stewart and G. Steward

Van Winkle Church, Jackson, will host the state convention for Concerned Women for America on Nov. 14. Featured speakers will be Carmen Pate, president, Washington, DC; Judith Riesman, author, Arlington, Va.; Kathy Stevens, Mississippi area representative, Hattiesburg; and Eunice Ray, coordinator, Kentucky. The convention will be held from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. with registration from 8-8:30 a.m. For more information, call Kathy Stevens at (601) 583-3147.

The Gospel Messengers of Gunter Road Church, Florence, will host their 29th anniversary and homecoming at Florence Middle School on Nov. 14. For more information, call (601) 845-2453 or 1-888-222-2517 (Pin 2076).

Make a Difference Weekend with volunteers from Calvary Church, Waynesboro, was held on Saturday, Oct. 24. "The 110 volunteers assembled at 8 a.m. in the Family Life Center for pictures, instructions, and most importantly prayer. During the course of the next five hours these

volunteers cooked and delivered meals to 100 shut-ins, raked 15 yards for local residents, cleaned 12 houses for elderly, painted one house, sang at four local senior adult nursing facilities, baked cookies for community helpers and newcomers to the city, provided childcare for volunteers, fixed a fence for a homebound person, repaired a roof for a widow, and picked up trash along city



Unity Church, Georgetown, held dedication services on Oct. 25 for its new building. Pictured (from left) are Jerome McLendon, pastor; and Matt Buckles, consultant, Church Administration/Pastoral Ministries, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.



First Church, Chicora, celebrated its 45th anniversary on Oct. 4. Elna Stokely brought a brief history of the church and each of the charter members were recognized. Levon Crane brought the message for the morning service. David Roberson is pastor. Pictured (from left) are Lynn Mackey, director of missions, Wayne Association; Roberson; Stokely; Maude Pope; William Henry Crane; Henry Lee Crane; Ouida Crane; Waymon Harris; Norman Crane, and Foster Mills.



'Make a Difference' volunteers, Calvary Church, Waynesboro



'Make a Difference' volunteers, Calvary Church, Waynesboro street," said Gwenette Broome, wife of Doug Broome, pastor.

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MAY 6-16:

Evangelism with Sports teams;
closes March 22, 1999

JUNE 17-29:

Evangelism, church plant, VBS, Medical/Dental clinics,
Veterinarian Clinics;
closes May 3, 1999

JULY 22-AUGUST 3:

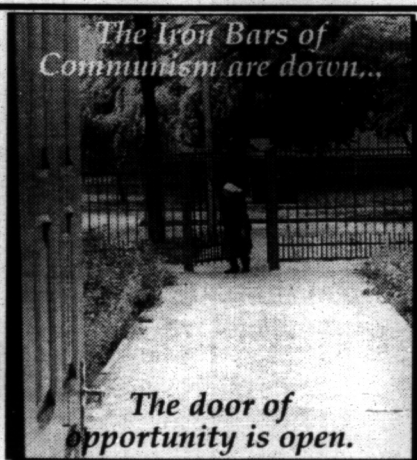
Evangelism team, VBS, Medical/Dental, and/or
Veterinarian Clinics;
closes June 8, 1999

SEPTEMBER 16-28:

Evangelism, multiminity, Medical/
Dental clinics;
closes August 2, 1999

Cost: \$2150 (est.) per person includes round trip airfare Jackson-Odesa, lodging, 2 meals/day, visa, transportation, translators, and gratuities. Deposit of \$200 reserves airline seat; balance due by closing date.

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College news

Mississippi College Department of Music will present Kimberly Alexander, soprano, and Samuel Bass, tenor, in a joint voice recital at 3 p.m. on Nov. 16 in Aven Auditorium. Alexander, a junior, is the daughter of Bobby and Annette Alexander of DeKalb. Bass, a senior, is the son of Pat Bass and Charles Bass of Jackson.

Miss. CBF convenes Fall meeting in Jackson

JACKSON, Miss. (Special) — The Fall meeting of the Mississippi Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) was held Oct. 9-10 at Calvary Church, Jackson, according to Bradley Pope, Miss. CBF coordinator.

One hundred and eighty people from 35 Mississippi Baptist churches heard inspirational messages, attended breakout sessions, elected new officers, and approved a record 1999 budget of \$57,800 — reflecting the fellowship's interest in missions and a positive outlook for growth, Pope reported.

Ralph and Tammy Stocks, CBF missionaries to the Gypsy people in Hungary, were the featured speakers.

Inspirational music was provided by the Mississippi

Regional Arts Council chorus, "The United Voices of Praise," under the direction of Jon Blouin.

Susan Hooks Meadors, a 1981 graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a 1988 graduate of Southern Seminary Louisville, Ky., was elected moderator.

She presently serves as Minister of Youth and Education at Northside Church, Clinton.

Eight new coordinating council members were also elected, Pope reported.

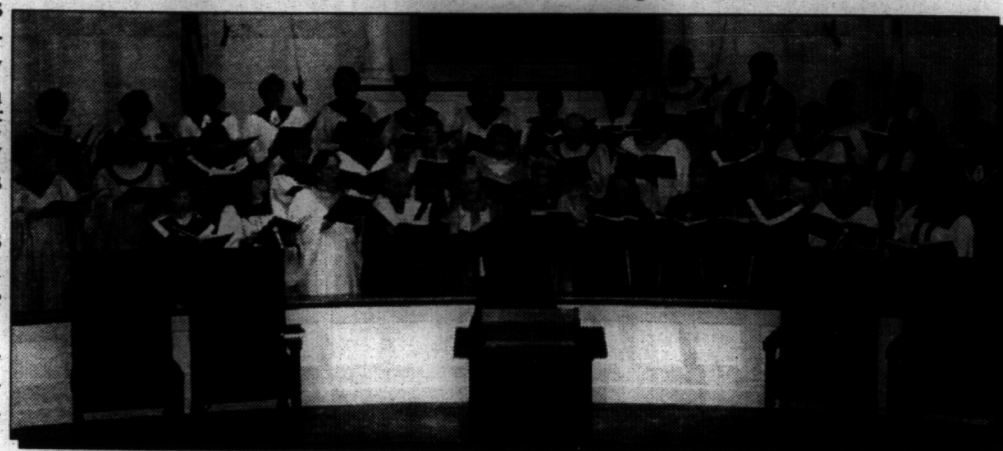
The next CBF meeting is planned for April 9, 1999. John Tyler, CBF national moderator,

will be the featured speaker. The location will be announced at a later date, Pope added.

For more information on Miss. CBF activities, contact Pope at (601) 355-7824.



CBF MISSIONARIES — Ralph and Tammy Stocks, CBF missionaries to the Gypsy people in Hungary, shares news of their work at the fall meeting of the Mississippi CBF at Calvary Church, Jackson. (BP special photo)



SONGS OF PRAISE — The Mississippi Regional Arts Council chorus, "The United Voices of Praise," brings inspirational music to the fall meeting of the Mississippi Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at Calvary Church, Jackson. The group is under the direction of Jon Blouin. (BP special photo)

Group uses fishing to bond fathers and children

KIMBERLING CITY, Mo. (ABP) — Jesus told his first two disciples, both fishermen, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Missouri Baptist layman Larry Sifford has picked up on that idea, using fishing to strengthen families and lead people to faith in Christ.

Motivated by guilt that he was not spending enough time with his two sons, Sifford, a member of First Church in Kimberling City, Mo., started the organization, Like Father, Like Son in 1993.

At first, it was an awareness program urging fathers to spend more time with their children, using a video series and a workbook, but the organization soon discovered that men needed more than general encouragement.

They needed something specific, that

they could put on their calendars. A former marine dealer and resort operator, Sifford hit on fishing.

Five years later, Like Father, Like Son (LFLS) is growing rapidly. Recently at Missouri's Table Rock Lake, 114 father-son, father-daughter and grandparent-grandchild teams competed in the season-ending LFLS regional tournament.

They qualified by fishing in at

least three of a half-dozen state tournaments conducted in Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Kansas during the year. The only age requirement is that participants must be at least 7 years old, which makes for a wide range of competitors.

"We've got 70-year-old dads fishing with 40-year-old sons," Sifford noted.

Four of the teams went home with new, fully equipped fishing boats. All of them went home with memories of hours spent together on the water, and 15 participants went home having made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Sifford's concept has caught on in a big way, spreading to 10 states and spawning a

magazine with a circulation of 80,000. In March 1999, the first LFLS Grand National Championships will take place in Florida.

Besides strengthening families, LFLS is designed to win people to the Lord. It is not overtly evangelistic but takes a subtle, "lifestyle evangelism" approach, he said. For example, alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

"You've got to understand the mentality of the fisherman," Sifford said. "Fishermen are known as the world's biggest liars. In order for a fisherman to believe another fisherman, he's got to build trust and credibility with his peers."

One way Sifford attempts to gain fishermen's trust is through an honest and well-run contest. He advertises to fishermen that they can compete in tournaments and win prizes. Then he delivers on his promise, with the help of corporate sponsors.

This way, when he shares the gospel with them, they are ready to listen, he said, and they are inclined to believe what he tells them is true.

The regional tourney includes a "fathering seminar," which fisherman must attend to pick up tickets for a drawing for a \$20,000 bass boat which takes place the next day. Once there, they hear the gospel.

The two-day regional tournament is the only LFLS event in which participants fish on Sunday. A brief devotional service precedes the second-day launch.

Ryan Sifford, 18, is Larry and Judy

Sifford's younger son. Ryan said he appreciates the time his dad has spent fishing with him. He learned technique, but that was not the only benefit. "Just the quality time is something that you can't ever replace."

The grins of the youngsters as their catches were weighed for the tournament confirmed that they all felt like winners.



Ron Mumfower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

LifeAnswers

I agreed to allow my 16-year-old daughter to have her ears double-pierced, but she also came home with a pierced navel. Why did she go further than our agreement?

Your daughter is attempting to make a statement. Granted, she should not have gone further than your agreement and there must be consequences for such behavior, but consider the need for her generation — Generation X — to seek deeper meaning in life than they are seeing in our culture today. Sadly, Generation X members don't have the moral and social underpinnings many of us enjoyed in previous generations. She may have done it for the extra attention it would attract, or it may have been simple immaturity that caused her to exceed the limits to which you had agreed. She needs your listening ear as she lurches unsteadily toward adulthood. Do what you have to do as a responsible parent, but don't over-react. Stay calm and allow your daughter to be heard. The benefits of doing so will become evident as she makes even more important life decisions in the years to come.

My 20-year old son wants a tattoo, but I'm against it. What should I do?

Lev. 19: 28 (NIV) states, "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord." Commentaries indicate some pagan cults in that day were cutting their bodies and using tattoos to mourn the dead. Obviously, God was displeased with this conduct. The New Testament states that our bodies should be the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19 NIV) and "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom. 12:1 NIV). Discuss with your son these and other Scriptures dealing with the sanctity of his body. A tattoo is essentially a brand he will wear for the rest of his life. Perhaps you could have your son talk with an adult who regrets being branded for life with a tattoo that no longer means anything to him. Base your comments on medical fact and Scripture, and be there to answer his questions and concerns. If he has been able to turn to you for answers thus far in his life, you likely will have an impact on this decision.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.



BIG ONE — Larry Herron (left) of Joplin looks on as his grandson Timothy Gingrich of Neosho shows off a large bass they caught in Table Rock Lake during the Like Father, Like Son regional fishing tournament. The two won a boat for their efforts in the October 17-18 tourney. They were one of 114 teams competing in the tournament. Timothy's father, Larry Gingrich, is associate pastor of Calvary Church, Neosho. (BR special photo)

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Guidelines for right action

Exodus 22:22-27; 23:6-8, 24:1-4

By Walter M. Blackman

Watching children play board games can be very entertaining. Often, they want to play, but do not take time to master the rules. When a situation arises where rule interpretation is needed, they usually will argue without consulting the rules. If someone shares with them the rules, they can solve the dilemma quickly. If no one is present to help them, the game becomes less enjoyable.

God intended for his people to enjoy life. He wanted the Israelites to live together and solve their problems in a fair and just way.

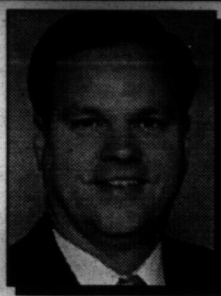
In Exodus 20:22-23:33, the Ten Commandments are specifically

applied to social situations. This portion of Exodus is called the Book of the Covenant or the Covenant Code.

In the Book of the Covenant, God gave his people principles for dealing with specific social situations they would face. God's principles are still the guidelines for right action today.

Demonstrating concern for the helpless and poor (22:22-27).

Widows and orphans were very vulnerable in ancient times. Poverty, prostitution, and slavery were usually the only options the widows and orphans had. God's law provided special protection for them and carried a stern warning of judgment if they were



Blackman

mistreated in any way.

The poor of the land were also to be treated fairly and compassionately. If money was loaned to a poor person, no interest was to be charged. If a cloak of a poor person was given as collateral, it was to be returned by nightfall so the person would have something for warmth.

God has always had a special concern for the helpless of society. Jesus demonstrated concern for the helpless and the poor during his ministry. It is not an accident that Jesus' birth was announced to lowly shepherds, or took place in humble surroundings. He was a husband to the widow and a father to the orphan. He identified with the helpless and poor, giving them hope.

Demonstrating justice (23:6-8). The problems of our justice

system are not much different from those in Moses' day. The wealthy could afford to pay for 'fairness' in their lawsuits, but the poor relied entirely on truth and justice. God warned the wealthy of using false charges, murder, bribery, and oppression for personal gain at the expense of the poor and helpless. They might win in court, but God would ultimately judge them as guilty.

As Christians, our legal dealings should be honest and above reproach. In a world where lawsuits are frequent and often frivolous, we ought to set the highest standards for fairness, justice, and truthfulness. Lawyers, judges, jurors, defendants, and plaintiffs should put justice and truth above winning and personal profit.

Pledging obedience (24:1-4). The covenant entered into by God with his people at Sinai was affirmed again. The Lord called Moses, his brother Aaron,

and Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's sons), along with seventy elders to draw nearer to the Lord. Beyond a certain point, only Moses was allowed near to the Lord. What a beautiful picture! The leaders of God's people came near to the Lord so they in turn could lead God's people to a closer walk with him. The elders were apparently the judges Moses appointed to help solve problems. Aaron and his sons were the spiritual leaders, acting as priests between the people and God. Everyone needed to affirm their obedience to God's Word.

We must be willing to affirm our obedience to the Lord's Word every day. A constant and daily filling of the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome our natural tendency to act selfishly and empowers us to deal with others as God would have us do.

Blackman is pastor of First Church, Marion.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

A time of accounting

Jeremiah 19:1-4, 10-11; 21:1-2, 8-10

By Greg Bowers

A wicked farmer blasphemed God at every turn. He mocked his neighbors because they prayed and attended church. One Autumn afternoon after leaving the bank, he said to one of his neighbors, "I have done everything I know to do to demonstrate my hatred for God and Christians, yet this year was my best year ever. How do you explain that?" His wise neighbor replied, "God doesn't always settle his accounts in October like you do." Twenty-five hundred years ago, God's people largely ignored his claims upon their lives, but God

raised up a compassionate, yet fearless prophet named Jeremiah who reminded them of God's approaching judgment upon them.

Painful message (19:1-4). God instructed Jeremiah to get a bottle and take it to the Valley of Hinnom, the site of child sacrifice which had been turned into the Jerusalem trash dump where fires burned at all times. The Valley of Hinnom (or Gehenna) is one of the words used for "Hell," a comparison the residents of Jerusalem could make immediately. Verse three indicates that the news of God's impending judgment would be



Bowers

so dreadful that it would literally cause the people to shudder. God's charges against his people were four-fold: 1) They had forsaken him. 2) They had estranged this place, meaning they had made it like a foreign land with all of their idolatry. 3) They had burned

incense to other gods. 4) They had filled the area with the blood of innocents. Verse nine states that the punishment would be so severe that the residents would be forced into cannibalism.

Dramatic picture (19:10-11). The jar was broken as a dramatic symbol of what God is preparing for the inhabitants of Judah. Once broken, the jar was irreparable. The message was unmistakable. God was going to smash Judah just as the jar was smashed. The traditional burial place would be insufficient to

bury all of the casualties of God's judgment. Most people would rather emphasize God's grace, mercy, and love concern. God is all of those things, but his is also a holy God who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. Christ took all of his Father's righteous wrath upon himself in order that God's judgment upon our sins might be avoided. Persons who refuse Christ's offer of salvation will meet God in all of his righteous fury. George W. Truett, pastor of FBC, Dallas, from 1897-1944, said that everyone will meet God, either in grace or in judgment. I am grateful that I met God in grace almost 30 years ago.

Hopeful query (21:1-2). Zedekiah, the king of Judah, panicked when the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the fierce Babylonian army. He sent messengers to Jeremiah hoping against all hope that Jeremiah will intercede for them

to God and that God's judgment will somehow be withheld. Jeremiah sent the messengers back to the king with the solemn news that God's judgment was "full speed ahead."

Clear choice (21:8-10). The people were offered a choice. They could either remain inside of the city walls during the siege and be killed or they could surrender to the invading army and be spared. Neither choice was very appealing. I am sure that the people pleaded for a third option — that God would drive away the enemy like he had done so many times before. That wasn't a viable option and the people were forced to decide between the two options given by Jeremiah. Throughout the scriptures, God offered a choice — the way of life or the way of death. How will you choose?

Bowers is pastor of First Church, Indianola.

LIFE AND WORK

Overcoming opposition

Nehemiah 4:1-3, 6-12, 14, 19-20

By Michael Johnson

The movie Titanic has certainly made its mark in motion picture history. The movie was not made, however, without its critics. The May 27, 1997 edition of USA Today reported that director James Cameron was under fire for the more than \$200 million price tag. Scheduled for release during the summer of 1997, the film was delayed because Cameron was not pleased with the original high-tech computer effects and ordered them revamped. "If you can't take chances, as an artist," Cameron was quoted, "you might as well be working at General Motors designing the next family sedan."

Nehemiah, of course, knew nothing about the movie busi-

ness, but he knew a great deal about taking chances and dealing with critics. Last week's commentary referred to some of the obstacles Nehemiah faced as he began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. In chapter 4, we learn that Nehemiah also had to contend with mockery and public ridicule (4:1-3), along with news of an armed attack by a formidable alliance (4:7-12). Lessons drawn from Nehemiah's response to his critics can assist us the next time we face opposition.

Ignore ridicule (4:1-3, 6). Young children seem to know the truth of this strategy when they chant, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me." The truth of



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the matter, however, is that words can sting which bring pain and plant seeds of doubt and insecurity. Certainly, whenever we are engaged in worthwhile projects it pays to listen to critics. Listening to other viewpoints can, in fact, strengthen our work when we incorporate details that might have been overlooked. But when assailed by doubt and ridicule, it is also helpful to examine the source and motivation of those attacks.

Sanballat, an opposition leader, responded to Nehemiah apparently out of fear and rage (4:1) for his own personal position of power was being threatened. Sanballat even put on an intimidating display of power (4:2). But what follows are verbal attacks aimed at playing on the doubts and insecurities of the Israelites. This strategy can be effective for we are all full of fears and feelings of insecurity. When we are confident, however, of the

task that God has given us, we simply must redouble our efforts to walk in his obedience and ignore the taunts of the enemy.

Take opposition seriously (4:7-9). As already indicated, it is instructive to listen to the opposition when constructive criticism is being offered. There are those, however, who will do whatever they can to stop you regardless of the reason. When it became obvious to Nehemiah that his enemies plotted to attack Jerusalem, the threat was taken seriously. First and foremost, the Jews prayed to God. While prayer is crucial and foundational, oftentimes we must 'put feet to our prayers'. In other words, Nehemiah did not just expect God to work miraculously; he posted guards and equipped them not only with trowels, but with swords.

Counter discouragement (4:10-12, 14). Even though those in verse 12 may have been alarmists; Nehemiah sought to encourage the people by reminding them they were engaged in

great work for God and God would be with them. He reminded them that they were making a stand for their homes and families and should be courageous. These same words can certainly encourage us whenever we are plagued with doubts.

Be thorough in preparation (4:19-20). Recognizing that the workers were widely dispersed, Nehemiah developed a communication system using trumpets. The Jews were further encouraged by knowing that if trouble came there was a way to call for assistance.

Many who study this week's lesson can identify with Nehemiah for they have, at times, experienced opposition to worthwhile things they have attempted. Nehemiah provides us with a role model to follow when we encounter similar situations. Remember that the impossible is what nobody can do until somebody does!

Johnson is a professor in the Christian Studies and Philosophy Department at Mississippi College.

'Experiencing God' gets companion CD

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — When God speaks, people should listen and respond, according to one of seven precepts of the popular Experiencing God study.

That's what John Mays did when he began developing the Experiencing God CD due out Nov. 17.

"You don't pray for God to bless what you're doing. You look for what God is blessing and you do that," said Mays, senior vice president of artists and repertoire for Star Song Records, a division of EMI Christian Music Group.

Based on the popular Christian study, "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God," the 11-song compact disc delivers through music the seven biblical principles authors Henry Blackaby and Claude King write about in their discipleship course.

"I prayed and asked God if this is something he wanted to affirm. I didn't want to push it because I had this holiness attached to Mr. Blackaby and his work. I didn't want to demean that and make a piece of product," said Mays, who has completed Experiencing God twice, once on his own and once with a group.

The Experiencing God study is produced by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The story of "Experiencing God: Music for Knowing and Doing the Will of God" is biblical in length, but its basic premise, Mays said, is a melodious offering for churches — "one that is backed by a study that has touched so many lives."

Mays said he developed a concern that "in trying to be

relevant to the culture and speak the language that youth can identify with, we [the Christian music business] have left out the church."

That concern only grew, Mays said, during a conversation he had with a music leader following a Christian youth concert.

"The guy said, 'This isn't the kind of music I can sing in my church. Where can I go to get that kind of music?' And I just didn't have a very good answer for him."

That conversation took place five years ago, and the idea of making a relevant album for churches has haunted him since, Mays said.

"God used that conversation to kick up some dirt in my life. I was a guy who was pretty guilty of following the Christian music track, which is to make hits that sound pretty much like the current trend, get on the radio and sell records," Mays said.

"Part of what we should be about in this industry is being relevant to the culture and compelling the youth of this country toward the gospel," he said. "But I don't think we should do that to the exclusion of the church."

Eventually, Mays met John Kramp, who was then second in command of the discipleship division at LifeWay.

"John and I began to talk about this whole church and music issue and how our industry seems to have forsaken its relationship with the church."



EXPERIENCING GOD — Sam House, Experiencing God specialist for LifeWay Church Resources, teaches the popular Christian study to about 50 employees of EMI Christian Music Group in Brentwood, Tenn. The employees expressed an interest in taking the course following the production of the new Experiencing God compact disc/cassette. (Photo by Jim Veneman)

Kramp, now director of LifeWay's operations division, said several people had approached him about producing an Experiencing God album, but none seemed quite right until he met Mays.

"We had hesitated to do anything for fear that it would be simply an exploitation of the Experiencing God name and idea," Kramp said. "I can't really explain what made John Mays so different in how he approached this, other than to say, 'He got it.'"

"He had done Experiencing God as a course and was passionate about the message. He also had a heart for the church and a concern that the music industry had drifted away from the church."

Mays and Kramp decided to convene a conference, hosted by LifeWay, and invite Blackaby to speak to writers, executives and artists from the Christian music industry.

"In that meeting, Henry spoke to the group about experiencing God — not the product — and then we simply issued a challenge that if God laid some music on people's hearts, we wanted to hear about it," Kramp said.

Mays noted, "I was on a spiritual high after that conference, and everybody was coming up to me and they were so encouraging, but the dust settled and I never heard from anybody. Nobody called. I told John, 'I guess that was it,' and he said, 'Not so fast. Let's see what happens.'"

A half-year after the conference for musicians in Nashville, Tenn., Tony Wood, a good friend of Mays and a respected songwriter, asked for a meeting with him.

"I've known Tony five or six years, and I've cut a lot of his songs, but he's never wanted a meeting. He came to my office,

and he sat right there," Mays said, pointing to a tan couch in his contemporary-furnished office.

"He opened his notebook, and he must have had 50 songs in there. Then he said, 'These are all songs about Experiencing God,'" Mays said.

"For me, that was the first shoe to drop. It took longer than I thought it would, and it didn't happen the way I thought it would, but Tony was a guy the Lord just wouldn't let rest. He had the Experiencing God thumb on him."

Eventually, two other Nashville-based writers — Lowell Alexander and Dave Clark — joined the writing team, and those three spent one night a week for a year putting together the 11 original songs on the Experiencing God album, Mays said.

"This was an enormous commitment for them," said Mays, who had asked for songs to be written within the framework of Experiencing God's seven realities.

Mays said the recording process started without a complete list of artists. Eventually, everything fell into place, and the album was completed around the first of September 1998.

"When I listened to it with my family — when I finally heard the music coming out of the speakers at my home, I just bawled," said Mays, who hopes the album will serve at least two purposes.

First, he said he hopes churches will use the Experiencing God songs during worship services.

Second, Mays said he hopes the CD will enhance the Bible study for those taking the course or entice those who aren't to do so.

"I'd love that if this album would drive someone toward the study," he said.

Bibliocipher

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HSOLO UK HSOLOWALO
TAF TA YATXORTTEHUAT
HA HSOR FSUYS ELO UT
YSLUKH QOKIK, FSA FENP
TAH EWHOL HSO
WNOKS, ZIH EWHOL HSO
KMULUH.

LARETK OUVSH: ATO

Clue: F = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Proverbs Three Five.

Musician taps Internet to share praise songs

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP) — Don't worry if you can't think of the perfect song to go in your next worship service Sunday morning — just look on the Internet.

"More people should get on the World Wide Web and find what's there," said Becky Richardson, a second-year music student at Golden Gate Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., who puts self-penned worship music on her personal Internet site.

Richardson said she has had more than 750 visits since she launched her site in July, some from as far away as Canada and India.

Currently, she has six praise songs that she and a fellow church member have written on the site — some with audio or MIDI files — plus lead sheets, sheet music, and lyrics. Though there is also a solo alternative song and a choral work solely for listening and viewing pleasure, worship leaders who hold Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) licenses can download the praise songs and use them in their congregations, she said.

"People who have CCLI membership don't have to tell me when they use my songs, but it's encouraging when they do," she said. "People who don't have CCLI can still e-mail me and I can give them permission to use them."

"At this point, I don't mind giving my music away, but I don't want someone to go out and make a profit off my music," she said. "I want to ensure that the music is being used in Christian worship settings."

Richardson said the Internet scares people because of the unchristian things it has on it, but it can be a ministry tool, too. "I don't keep my music in the closet this way," she said. "I'm using it for the Lord. It seems like a little thing, but I've gotten so much joy out of this web site."

Richardson, who wants to pursue an evangelistic concert ministry when she graduates, said she already had done the recordings when she found she could make a web page under her Internet service provider membership. Her web page is <http://members.aol.com/beckyricha>.